

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump President The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply troubled by recent news¹ that you intend to host your own event on the National Mall to coincide with the annual Fourth of July celebration, and that the Department of the Interior (DOI) will facilitate it.

For decades, the Fourth of July on the National Mall has been non-partisan and apolitical. It routinely brings tens of thousands of visitors to our nation's capital to join in celebration of America's founding. It is a time for celebration of and reflection on the sacrifices made by our founding generation of men and women to win independence for our nation. It is, therefore, unfortunate that you are considering a conflicting event, which could create the appearance of a televised, partisan campaign rally on the Mall at public expense.

The logistics, security and costs to the federal government of hosting the Fourth of July annual celebration on the Mall are substantial and Congress appropriated funds for this occasion only after careful deliberation. To add yet another event on the Mall, with the President of the United States in attendance, will create substantial unplanned costs without Congressional review. Moreover, presidential movement around the Mall and the accompanying security could severely inhibit access to and egress from our nation's capital for the tens of thousands of visitors hoping to attend. Finally, we have serious concerns about the impact costs from such an event may have on the operating budget for National Mall and Memorial Parks. If the park unit is forced to absorb additional costs it will have to make reductions in other areas, such as visitor services or facilities operation and maintenance.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-takes-over-fourth-of-july-celebration-changing-its-location-and-inserting-himself-into-the-program/2019/05/10/40f428c0-733d-11e9-9eb4-0828f5389013 story.html?utm term=.8d3124735d77

We are also troubled that an event like the one being contemplated does not comport with DOI's focus on addressing its well-publicized maintenance backlog². For example, the National Park Service's latest report, the National Capital Region alone has over \$520 million in "Critical Systems Deferred Maintenance." Rather than spending millions of taxpayer dollars on what could appear to be a campaign rally, those funds would be far better spent addressing the Department's maintenance backlog to ensure the "more than 300 million visitors come to national parks knowing they will have an exceptional experience."

We respectfully call on you to look for ways to complement, not conflict with, the Fourth of the July celebration, such as considering an earlier time or alternative location for your remarks. We look forward to continuing the tradition in place for more than half a century of celebrating our nation's Independence Day with an event that is, apolitical and open and accessible to all Americans visiting our nation's capital.

Sincerely,

Steny H. Hoyer Majority Leader

Betty McCollum

Chair, Appropriations

Subcommittee on Interior,

Environment, and Related Agencies

Raúl M. Grijalva

Chair, Committee on Natural

Resources

Cc: David Bernhardt, Secretary Department of the Interior

² https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/maintenance-backlog.htm

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/upload/NPS-Asset-Inventory-Summary-FY18-Region 2018.pdf